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HISTORY'S UNWEEDED GARDEN:
Common Errors in Western Pennsylvania History

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Fie on't! Oh fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature possess it.—HAMLET

ERROR is a hardy plant," wrote Martin F. Tupper; "it flourisheth in every soil." Unfortunately, the soil of Western Pennsylvania history has offered ample proof of the truth of Tupper's aphorism ever since he wrote it nearly a century and a half ago. And all too often the result has been that the error has tended to drive out the truth, just as — nineteenth-century economists told us — bad money drives out good. Perhaps this occurs at least in part because we tend to err in the direction we (in part subconsciously) wish the things we are reporting had really gone, instead of as they did move.

Such misleading statements are probably not more frequent in historical writings concerning this area than in those of other districts. (I know of no comparative surveys on such matters, although such a check might prove a worthwhile cooperative effort among historical societies over a wide territorial range.) But they are common enough to be a cause of genuine concern, which was the reason for this article's being requested. Errors — and often serious ones — are found not only in newspapers and radio and television programs, and in pamphlets by enthusiastic but poorly prepared writers; all too often they appear — and frequently go unchallenged — in serious and sup-

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posedly authentic books and magazines and in documentary films. Since contributing causes and the deleterious effects of historical errors are much the same for all these media, they will be considered together here.

Historical errors may get into circulation from a variety of causes; accident, carelessness, faulty memory, misunderstanding, copying, poor research, bias, forgery, and the confusion of folklore and history are among the more common sources. That the first four are relatively innocent in nature does not in any way mitigate the damage done by their results.

Accidental errors, like those of carelessness and misunderstanding, often result from poor reading (as in the case of James Bowman, an early Pittsburgh artist, usually referred to in stories on local painters as "A. Bowman," by misreading an early indefinite "a Bowman" as an initial[1]), poor proofreading, or supposing a word or phrase means more than, or something different from[2] its real sense. Against such blunders, only care and research are needed by the writer, although they sadly compound the reader's problem.

Copying is widely practiced — would-be historians are such thieves — and is, as someone[3] once said, "more than a crime; it is a blunder." The tyro is particularly apt to err in "stealing" citations made by previous writers — what Lord Lytton referred to as "the error of the would-be scholar — namely, quote second-hand." [4] Taking such bits apart from the context, or even copying with the context at hand, it is easy to compound the felony by missing the point, or overwriting it in an effort to conceal the theft.[5]

Errors of accident, carelessness, faulty memory, copying, and misunderstanding are culpable. Poor research, bias, forgery, and confusion

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1 Erasmus Wilson, *Standard History of Pittsburg* (Chicago, 1898), 862f; Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh: The Story of a City* (Pittsburgh, 1937), 254; John W. Oliver, "Pittsburgh's Awakening 100 Years Ago," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 13 (July 1930): 192 (hereafter cited as *WPHM*); E. P. Anderson, "The Intellectual Life of Pittsburgh, 1786-1836," *ibid.* 14 (Oct. 1931): 292.

2 For instance, "Address of William H. Stevenson at the Unveiling of Harris Memorial Tablet," *WPHM* 12 (Oct. 1929): 207. The Nickelodeon was not the first motion picture theater by at least three years. See Joseph N. Kane, *Famous First Facts,* 3rd ed. (New York, 1964), 396.

3 Variously attributed to Joseph Fouché, C. M. de Talleyrand-Perigord, and Boulay de la Meurthe.

4 John F. W. White, "The Judiciary of Allegheny County," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (1883): 157; cf. George Swetnam, "Where Did George Croghan Die?" *WPHM* 55 (Jan. 1972): 60.

5 Discussed at more length in my article cited above, *WPHM* 55 (Jan. 1972): 55-63.

with folklore are inexcusable. Yet, alone or with other faults they have inserted many grave errors into the historical literature of this area. It seems elementary that anyone attempting research should begin by carefully surveying secondary literature on his subject, but even this minimal preparation is sometimes neglected.

Some of the most ridiculous blunders resulting from carelessness and outstandingly poor research are to be found in the Pennsylvania bicentennial *Official Passport to History,* a forty-eight-page tear-out supplement financed at great cost by the commonwealth for publication in the *Reader's Digest* of March 1976. Were it not such a staggering waste and perpetuation of errors, the whole thing would have been laughable. For example, the map of "Pennsylvania Southwest" shows two towns in Beaver County: Beaver, at the proper location of Beaver Falls, and Aliquippa. Old Economy is placed where Rochester should be, and the stream flowing from Pittsburgh to that point is plainly marked in capital letters "BEAVER RIVER." And all these years we had supposed it was the Ohio which was formed at Pittsburgh by the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela. Incidentally, not one site of historical interest is marked in Allegheny County outside Pittsburgh.

A sampling of the many mistakes in the *Passport* resulting from carelessness and poor research includes such blunders as that the Battle of Bushy Run *led to* (instead of broke) the Indian siege of Fort Pitt; flax is "scatched" (for "scutched") at Stahlstown; Bowman's Castle is on the site of Fort Burd (erroneously believed by many at Brownsville); the Youghiogheny Dam is on U. S. 40 (wrong by nearly eight miles); "Indian Sam Mohawk" was a pioneer bad man; Bilgers Rocks become "Bigler's Rock," with "caverns" and "caves" which do not exist; and the Homer City generating station has a "12,000 ft." (top that!) smokestack.[6] All we know of the origin of these and scores of other blunders is that the booklet was the work of the state's Bicentennial Commission.

For examples and comment on errors resulting from bias, poor research, and misreading, see (to avoid repetition) this writer's "Where Did George Croghan Die?"[7] But there are two others too outstanding to be omitted here.

A horrible example of poor research is to be found in the very first volume of the *Life* history of the United States (Prehistory to

6 Pennsylvania, Bicentennial Commission, *Official Passport to History* (Harrisburg, 1976), 36.

7 *WPHM* 55 (Jan. 1972): 55-63.

1774), *The New World,* published in 1963. It bears the name, as author, of Richard B. Morris, a colonial history professor who is chargeable — at the very least — with a staggering lack of supervision of a work bearing his name on the title page. According to the forepages of the book, he was assisted in writing this 176-page publication (more than half pictures) by a *Life* series editor, an assistant editor, an associate designer, two staff writers, a chief and eleven other "researchers," two picture researchers, an art associate, three art assistants, three copy staff members, a publisher and a general manager — twenty-eight in all. Yet with only a casual reading, Robert C. Alberts of this Society found more than a dozen errors in the two pages — less than 1,000 words — devoted to the French and Indian War and this area.[8] These included gaffes in grammar, spelling, geography, historical fact, and historical interpretation. In a communication sent to aid with this article, he comments: "The errors crowd so closely one upon the other that the reader is at first incredulous, then amused, then embarrassed, and finally (remembering the promotion this work received) both appalled and alarmed."

One of the first is confusing the mission of George Washington here with that of Christopher Gist, and stating that in 1749 the future father of his country had surveyed this area for a crown grant. It has him being sent here to build the first fort and discovering on his arrival that the French were already building Fort Duquesne. (He had been 100 miles away when he learned the French had taken over the work others had been sent to do.) The account places Fort Necessity "nearby" Fort Duquesne, has Washington captured there, confuses his status under Braddock with that under Forbes, and perpetuates the myth of Braddock blundering into an ambush, of which more later. (It might be noted that Norris F. Schneider, in *The National Road: Main Street of America,* a forty-page pamphlet published in 1975 by the Ohio Historical Society, twice refers to an ambush, one into which Braddock is said to have fallen, a second — hitherto unknown to either history or folklore — which forced Washington to retreat to Fort Necessity.)[9]

A most outrageous example of error through bias is the fable — trumpeted throughout 1976 (and before and since) by stations KDKA (radio) and KDKA-TV — that scheduled broadcasting absolutely began with the KDKA offering of presidential election results in November 1920. The claim was not new, but has been made over

8 Richard B. Morris, *The New World* (New York, 1963), 146f.
9 See especially p. 2 of Schneider's pamphlet.

and over again for years, so much so that nearly everyone in this area believes it. Si Steinhauser, long-time radio editor and old enough to remember the facts (much less know them) was so carried away that he wrote of the locally celebrated broadcast: "This was the world's first broadcast," [10] and followed that up with many similar empty claims, such as: "Today nothing moves by electricity . . . that did not have its beginning in a Frank Conrad patent."

Had Steinhauser (then retired and freelancing) and his editor read their own paper, they would have known that Professor Reginald A. Fessenden, lately of the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh), had made clearly receivable broadcasts long before 1920, including a holiday program broadcast on Christmas Eve, 1906, from Brant Rock, Massachusetts, to Macrihanish, Scotland.[11]

An effort to correct the blunder[12] aroused some attention, pointing out that Station 8MK (now WWJ) Detroit, had made the first daily scheduled broadcasts beginning August 20, 1920, and offered local and congressional primary returns eleven days later, while the KDKA broadcasts were only on a semiweekly basis until December 1 of that year.[13] Also note that federal patent office records show numerous early patents by Conrad, but none dealing with radio until 1923, when broadcasting was well established, and that patent was on antenna design. The records show no radio patents of real importance ever having been granted to Conrad. But the trumpeting of the myth has continued blithely on to this day.[14]

Broadcast historical stories tend to be even more carelessly done than those in newspapers. Not only is the product ephemeral, but knowledgeable critics have difficulty in getting scripts, to make sure

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10 "Frank Conrad," *Pittsburgh Press Roto,* Oct. 18, 1970, 58-61.

11 Kane, *Famous First Facts,* 498; George Swetnam, "Radio Was Born Here — Twice," *Pittsburgh Press Family Magazine,* Apr. 22, 1956, 8f.

12 George Swetnam, "64 Years of Radio," *Pittsburgh Press Family Magazine,* Jan. 24, 1971, 12f.

13 Kane, *Famous First Facts,* 496, 497, 504.

14 And why not? It is of hoary antiquity (for an event within the memory of many), the claim appearing as early as *Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Spirit,* a volume of speeches for the fiftieth anniversary (1928) of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce. A. L. Humphrey, "Pittsburgh Fifty Years Hence," makes the claim (p. 363). But this is not the book's worst gaffe. William B. Rodgers, "Pittsburgh and Waterways," reports on p. 39: ". . . by 1760 a paper published at Brownsville, Pa., mentioned that a settlement of considerable size had sprung up at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, but that it could not amount to much, as it was too near Brownsville." This is a very common folklore theme, found in many variations in areas where there was or was believed to have been an early rivalry.

what was said. A record album prepared by KDKA for Joseph Horne Company for the city's bicentennial,[15] contains such items as:

1. "It all started when John Fraser built a cabin by the Monongahela in 1712." [16]
2. Connecting "Logan's Lament" with Pontiac's War, instead of Dunmore's.[17]
3. Bringing farm produce up the rivers to Pittsburgh from New Orleans, instead of the reverse.[18]
4. Dating the Whiskey Rebellion in 1800.[19]

There are many similar blunders.

But perhaps the finest collection of errors in one spot was in the opening scene of the city's bicentennial drama,[20] which, happily, was not made an annual event as at first planned. There a very old Reverend Francis Herron was speaking to an 1810 Independence Day celebration in Pittsburgh (where he came to preach in 1811 as a young man) when a boy rode up on a high-wheeled bicycle (a conveyance not invented until 1825, and of a type not made till 1883) when Mike Fink's gang started trouble. Just then they heard the whistle of a steamboat (the first steamboat here was 1811, and the steam whistle — invented in 1825 — was first used by the *Uncle Sam* in 1838), and the clergyman warned Fink that the steamboat had put his kind out of business, whereat the toughs slunk away.

It might also be noted that Editor William Trimble of this magazine has pointed out[21] thirty errors in the first century of the chronology of Stefan Lorant's widely circulated *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City,*[22] whose text is even less exact as to fact and interpretation.

It is very easy for a writer to assume that because he does not know an instance of something, it never occurred. Hence careless writing on history is full of words like "only," "first," and "last," and superlatives such as "biggest," "least," "smallest," and "largest," without proof of the facts involved. For instance, the title of an article in this magazine indicated an assumption that the Bates-Stewart duel of

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15 Ailene Goodman and Ed King, "Songs of a City" (Pittsburgh, 1958).
16 *Ibid.*, minute 2: 15.
17 *Ibid.*, minute 3: 50ff.
18 *Ibid.*, minute 5: 37f.
19 *Ibid.*, minute 9: 48. The record also puts electric lights in the railroad yards in 1880, and gives that year for the riots of 1877.
20 Kermit Hunter, *The Golden Crucible* (Pittsburgh, 1958).
21 William F. Trimble to author, Feb. 3, 1976.
22 2nd ed. rev. (Lenox, Mass., 1975).

January 8, 1806, was the final such incident in this state.[23] There was at least one more duel which ended fatally,[24] and it is not improbable that there may have been some or many others which occurred in remote areas, or have simply been played down by local historians for policy or other reasons. No writer should assert record-breaking or uniqueness without doing real research to make sure the claim is valid. It is always safer not to assert what is uncertain or cannot be proved.

Braddock Ambush

The most common and widely-believed error in all our local history is the legend of a French and Indian ambush that brought about Major General Edward Braddock's defeat at the Monongahela in July 1755. According to the story — and I hesitate to repeat it even here, lest it be further spread — Braddock was a proud and haughty officer, who scorned young George Washington and felt that the only way to fight was that of European battlefields, where two armies stood face to face and banged away until one of them was defeated.

This legend, involving ignorance of British military science, the Braddock-Washington relationship, and the known contemporary records of the event — both French and British — has been refuted too well and too often to need citation here. Yet the tradition persists, not only in popular thinking and almost universally in newspaper accounts, but even in supposedly erudite works. When for the two-hundredth anniversary of the battle, the *Pittsburgh Press* commissioned a local person well versed in history to do a story, I was astonished to find it gave this traditional explanation. After making some editorial changes, I pointed out to the writer that even original sources she had cited made the true facts clear, she replied: "I know. But practically every historical work I examined said that it was an ambush, and I felt I ought to go along."

In view of such a situation, one is forced to ask what is it that has caused the legend to exert such a strong pull that in the minds of most Western Pennsylvanians it still negates the true facts of the event? I believe the answer lies in a strong chauvinism which has obtained in

23 Thomas L. Rodgers, "The Last Duel in Pennsylvania," *WPHM* 12 (Jan. 1929) : 54.

24 Attorney James Herron, who had been admitted to the bar in 1820, at Uniontown [see Franklin Ellis, *History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1882)] was killed in a duel. See also George Swetnam, "The Surgeon and the Spy," *Pittsburgh Press Family Magazine,* Dec. 26, 1954, based on biographical notice in R. M. S. Jackson Papers, Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University. Herron was a brother-in-law of Andrew "Tariff Andy" Stewart, and father of Dr. Jackson's wife.

this area since early times, especially in regard to whites versus Indians, and for many years as related to the conflict between Britain and France.

To those in this area, steeped in British and particularly Scotch-Irish culture, it was unbelievable that a strong force of British and colonial troops could be so completely routed by less than half its number of the disdained tribesmen and a handful of Frenchmen, unless gross obtuseness or skullduggery were involved. With the anti-English feeling which arose here in not much more than a decade, the unfortunate Braddock became an ideal whipping boy. And his unfortunate remark to Benjamin Franklin, disparaging both Indians and provincial troops, provided a satisfactory explanation as to why the beloved hero, Washington, had failed to warn him. Historical folklore, which grows from wishful thinking, did the rest, and this legendary account was widely spread both in the early histories of this area, and in several fictional accounts of around a century ago,[25] some adorned with the additional legend of "Washington's first love," which appears to have sprung from his concern for Christopher Gist's daughter Ann,[26] although the one letter referring to her[27] certainly fails to indicate any amatory interest. Against such a barrage of rationalizing and charming folklore, fact has little chance of acceptance.

An additional factor in popular thinking, however, is the question: If there were no ambush, why was Braddock's large force defeated by a much smaller one? There were a number of factors: discipline was poor; there was a communications breakdown; and the morale of the force was low, after having been sniped at for more than 100 miles of slow progress through the wilderness. Another factor which may have been the dominant one in breaking the morale of the troops appears to have gone unnoticed until about two decades ago. This was the fact that most of the Indians were armed

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25 Rudolph Leonhart, *Wild Rose of the Beaver* (Akron, Ohio, 1886). Fifteen years later this novel was republished by Walter Scott Browne as *Rose of the Wilderness, or Washington's First Love.* He changed not one letter except that the hero's first name became "Gilbert" in place of "Campbell." But he wrote a preface telling of how he had spent years of research in order to be sure it was historically correct in every detail, and the book ran through several editions. Apparently Rose Demorest, then of the Pennsylvania Room at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, was the first to discover the plagiarism, about twenty-five years ago.

26 David Philipson, ed., *Letters of Rebecca Gratz* (Philadelphia, 1929), 200f.

27 John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799,* 39 vols. (Washington, 1931-1944), 2: 293f.

with rifles, while the British soldiers had only the old "Brown Bess" muskets. Smooth-bore and often loaded with mis-fit balls, these guns were less effective than the bow and arrow at a range of more than twenty yards. The Indians would pay almost any price for rifles, which were made by the "Pennsylvania Dutch" workmen in the eastern half of the state, and with them a good marksman could pick off his victim at over 100 yards, while safe from his enemy. It has been frequently noted that the British soldiers felt as if they were firing at phantoms, against whom their volleys had little or no effect. Two hours of such punishment would have been enough to unnerve better disciplined troops than Braddock's.

Numerous other folklore elements have made their way into the Braddock myth complex. Among the more common is the story that the general was shot by one of his own men, and specifically by one Thomas Fawcett (Fossit), who lived for many years in the mountains east of Uniontown. And there is the tale of Braddock's gold.

Braddock may indeed have been shot by one of his own men, either accidentally or on purpose, although the evidence is very thin, depending largely on admissions (offset by later denials) made by a maundering old man. Ritenour[28] has demonstrated that the assertion that Fawcett shot the general for killing his brother is ridiculous, although he may have struck the brother with his sword or otherwise.

The gold myth grew from the idea that Braddock brought a large sum of money in gold into the wilderness with him — the commonly accepted figure was £50,000 sterling — to pay his soldiers, workmen, and suppliers. It seemed a reasonable figure, and since the records showed nothing in regard to the money having been saved in the rout which followed Braddock's defeat at the Battle of the Monongahela, nor did the French accounts boast of securing such a prize, it seemed probable that the gold had been hidden, with a hope of retrieving it later.

The myth was fed by the desperate shortage of hard money in the transmontane region during the first three decades after the close of the Revolutionary war. It was embellished with an account of a soldier who had hidden the gold, then fled from the Indians, and went mad because he could never find the hiding place again. The search was pressed so hard that Frank Cowan states there was hardly a foot of ground in the area which had not been dug up by the gold seekers.[29]

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28 John S. Ritenour, *Old Tom Fossit* (Pittsburgh, 1926), 115.

29 Frank Cowan, *Southwestern Pennsylvania in Song and Story* (Greensburg, Pa., 1879), 44.

Even so recently as within the past two decades the myth surfaced in another form: that the French had indeed captured the gold, but that, fearing their Indian allies, they had buried it again in what is now northwestern Ohio. Power shovels and bulldozers were used in the fruitless search for a "probable" site. The "gold" was "found" some fifteen years ago by a member of this Society — safely back at Fort Cumberland. The money tumbril was taken only a short way into the wilderness, then returned to the fort.[30]

Mary Schenley

Perhaps no single feature of Western Pennsylvania's history has been more twisted and marred by mistakes of carelessness, wishful thinking, and sometimes crass sensationalizing than the accounts of Mrs. Mary Croghan Schenley, the Pittsburgh heiress who eloped with a British army officer and consular representative, eventually taking Pittsburgh's largest fortune to Britain.

A sampling of the many errors will suffice:

1. "The Croghans had a daughter, Mary Elizabeth, born . . . in 1826." [31]
2. ". . . Mrs. Croghan died in 1828." [32]
3. "Capt. . . . Schenley was a Belgian by birth." [33]
4. "Schenley . . . had a ne'er-do-well reputation." [34]
5. Schenley was "almost four times" Mary's age.[35]
6. When Croghan learned the couple had taken the ship for England, "he sent an armed ship after them. They went to Bermuda, instead." [36]

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30 Letters, James Furnis to the Board of Ordnance, from Fort Cumberland, July 23, and from Philadelphia, Oct. 7, 1755, William L. Clements Library, cited in Edward G. Williams, "Treasure Hunt in the Forest," *WPHM* 44 (Dec. 1961): 390. Williams, so far as I know, was also the first to point out the significance of the Indian use of rifles in an interview with this writer published in the *Pittsburgh Press Family Magazine.*

31 Ginny Frizzi, "The Schenley Romance," *Pittsburgh* 7 (Feb. 1976): 23, probably following Sarepta Kussart, "One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Mrs. Mary E. Schenley," *WPHM* 9 (Oct. 1926): 209.

32 Frizzi, "Schenley Romance," 23.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.* Frizzi apparently seeks to make a career of writing inadequately researched Pittsburgh history. Her latest, at this writing, is "The Playboy and the Showgirl," *Pittsburgh* 8 (Mar. 1977): 45ff, 65, on the Harry K. Thaw case, which appears to be based almost entirely on two recent popular books on the subject.

35 Ruth Salisbury, "Pittsburgh's Great Romance," *WPHM* 47 (Oct. 1964): 343.

36 Frizzi, "Schenley Romance," 23.

7. "The Schenleys . . . once stayed five years (1858-1863) at Picnic." [37]
8. Mrs. Schenley gave the city of Pittsburgh "9480 acres for Schenley Park." [38]

A great many more errors could be pointed out, but these have been chosen to illustrate the fact that such blunders have been and are being committed in recent years, and in prestigious publications which ought to use more care for accuracy. The facts in these instances are:

1. Mary Elizabeth Croghan was born April 27, 1827.[39] It was her sister, Mary O'Hara Croghan, who was born in 1826, dying about nine months later.
2. Mary O'Hara (Mrs. William) Croghan died Oct. 15, 1827, when her second daughter (later Mrs. Schenley) was under six months of age.[40]
3. Schenley was the son of an English squire (who spelled the name without the "c") and an English mother who was very beautiful, and (by family tradition) a favorite of the king.[41] In this error, as with several others, Ms Frizzi was compounding a mistake made by Mrs. Sarepta Kussart,[42] whose account was prepared with some research, but little effort at evaluating her sources. Mrs. Kussart wrote that "The father of Capt. Schenley was a Belgian by birth, but an officer in the British army, and his mother was an accomplished Irish woman."
4. Schenley, besides being an officer in an elite British regiment, had held a diplomatic post.[43]

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37 *Ibid.*, following Kussart, "One Hundredth Anniversary," 215. This error, and that on the date of Mary Croghan Schenley's birthdate (see above, n. 31) also appear in "Pittsburgh Women," a recent pamphlet issued by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

38 Stanton Belfour, "Pittsburgh's Philanthropic Tradition," *WPHM* 37 (Summer 1954) : 101. Belfour may have been thinking about Frick Park. Nor was Schenley the city's first park, as he states. George T. Fleming, *History of Pittsburgh and Environs,* 6 vols. (Chicago, 1922), 3: 639, notes that this was a small park on Second Avenue (now Boulevard of the Allies) near Grant.

39 Rose Demorest, statement in ms. file on Mrs. Schenley, 1942, in Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (hereafter cited as Demorest File, CLP). The file has been much looted in recent years. Her conclusion is supported by evidence cited in Charles W. Shetler, "The Evolution of the O'Hara-Schenley Properties in Allegheny County to 1880" (M.A. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1949), 45; *Pittsburgh Legal Journal,* Old Series, 27: 184.

40 Demorest File, CLP.

41 Alberta McLean (Mrs. Schenley's granddaughter) to Charles Shetler, May 29, 1949, Demorest File, CLP.

42 See above, n. 31.

43 McLean to Shetler, May 29, 1949, Demorest File, CLP.

5. This has been repeated so often it is frequently taken for granted. Born no earlier than June 1799,[44] Schenley was less than three times his third wife's age.
6. This error, which can be traced no farther back than a 1934 newspaper story,[45] has been embroidered by various hands. No contemporary stories or records mention such an intervention. Sending an armed ship to sea after the one on which they sailed would have been an act of war, if done by the nation, or of piracy if (as in some accounts) by the irate father. The account of Schenley's bribing the ship captain to take them to Bermuda to elude pursuit is obviously pure chauvinism: no one could outsail an American ship, hence it must have been thrown off the track when the British vessel changed course. Actually, they landed in England.[46]
7. Mrs. Kussart seems to have derived this startling information from two old caretakers whose mother had held a similar position at Pic-Nic, the Croghan-Schenley house here.[47] In 1859, Captain Schenley was campaigning in England for a seat in the House of Commons.[48] A fragment of a family paper in the badly looted file in the Pennsylvania Room at Carnegie Library (of which more later) says Mrs. Schenley's last visit to

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44 Schenley was only fifteen at the time of the Battle of Waterloo. McLean to Shetler, May 29, 1949, Demorest File, CLP; Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography* (Truro, 1901), 3: 437.

45 Gilbert Love, *Pittsburgh Press,* Feb. 21, 1934; this was followed and expanded upon by James Helbert, "Court Closes Book Here on 100-Year Love Story," *Pittsburgh Press,* Apr. 29, 1951. Even Shetler, "Evolution of the O'Hara-Schenley Properties," 57, appears partially taken in by this bit of folklore.

46 Shetler, "Evolution of the O'Hara-Schenley Properties," 61.

47 Kussart, "One Hundredth Anniversary," 215.

48 *The Annual Register, 1859* (London, 1860), 502. It is just possible, however, that the Schenleys may have lived in or near Pittsburgh for part, or parts, of this time. The Pittsburgh city directories (published under varying names, all compiled and edited by George H. Thurston [n.p. Pittsburgh], publication dates in each case the first of the two years in title) for 1858-1859, 1859-1860, 1861-1862, and 1862-1863 all list (in varying styles) Captain Schenley (spelled Shenley in 1861-1862) as having an office at 189 Penn Avenue, and a residence three times identified by its name, in the area of the Schenley mansion. This may not, on the other hand, indicate more than that he had a business agent at the given office location, and maintained a residence here. Such listings — particularly of prominent men — were not uncommon in directories. The *Social Directory* for Pittsburgh, for instance, listed "MR. CARNEGIE" [*sic*] long after he had moved his residence to New York, and after his brother Thomas (the only other prominent man of the name here) had died.

America was in 1853.[49]

8. As public records have long shown, Mrs. Schenley gave just over 300 acres for the park, later selling two smaller tracts for the same purpose.

Christopher Gist

Half a century ago Christopher Gist — a most important figure in the history of Western Pennsylvania — was so much a mystery man that amateurs and even "hedge wizard" historians could be forgiven for some of the egregious blunders made in reference to his life and career. But so much research has been done on him in the past two decades that no one who has done any research at all should make mistakes such as appeared in a bicentennial special edition of the *Pittsburgh Press Roto* magazine on May 9, 1976: "He [Gist] . . . died of smallpox in the South, either Georgia or South Carolina."[50] He died, of course, near Winchester, Virginia, on July 25, 1759, while escorting a group of Indian warriors to help in fighting the French.[51]

But if such needless blunders as this are disgusting, it is absolutely staggering to see the array of errors in the recent biography of Gist, whose author, Kenneth P. Bailey, is a tenured professor in one of the branches of the University of California.[52]

Some of these are caused by an incredible lack of knowledge about the area in which much of Gist's active career was laid, an ignorance which in most cases could have been cured by even a cursory glance at the map. Thomas Cresap's home was "on the Maryland side of the Potomac, eighteen miles above Wills Creek."[53] (Having written a biography of Cresap, Bailey should have known that Old Town was below that point.) Gist showed "surprising unfamiliarity with the

49 Unfortunately, because of the looting of this valuable file, prepared by an able historian, this fragment of a photocopy is completely without identification. I recall from using this file in 1958 that it was part of a letter from someone in the Schenley family, perhaps a great-granddaughter of Mrs. Schenley.

50 Margie Carlin, "A Revolutionary Who's Who for Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Press Roto,* May 9, 1976, 13. "Much of this information comes from *Pittsburgh Patriots,* a book put out in 1975 by the Pittsburgh Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution," noted Carlin. The booklet appears to have relied directly or indirectly on Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1931), 323-24, which derived the error from William M. Darlington, ed., *Christopher Gist's Journals* . . . (Pittsburgh, 1893), a work long out of date.

51 Capt. James Gunn to Maj. John Tulleken, July 31, 1759. British Museum Additional Mss. 21644, folio 266: 216f.

52 Kenneth P. Bailey, *Christopher Gist: Colonial Frontiersman, Explorer, and Indian Agent* (Hampden, Conn., 1976), dust jacket.

53 *Ibid.,* 32f.

region when he observed that he believed the Juniata . . . emptied into the Susquehannah" [*sic*].[54] (It still does.) Gist entered Ohio "at a point near where the little town of Lisbon stands today." [55] "The area of South Union, Whorton [*sic*] and Georges Townships . . . became the location of his new home . . . often called Gist's Plantation." [56] (Don't tell that to the people of North Union and Dunbar townships!) "Yohogania County . . . since 1781 [*sic*] a part of Fayette County, Pennsylvania." [57] (Don't let Allegheny and Washington county folk hear this.) And so on.

Much more serious is Bailey's confusion as to the roles of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Ohio Company in affairs here, even worse than the popular confusion; and his apparent failure to know the difference between land claims, grants, and patents is a matter which continually trips up the unwary, especially when writing about George Croghan.

By far the most serious fault in this work, which is bound to corrupt much later writing because it is the only recent biography of Gist, is his praise of and reliance upon materials *which he admits knowing are forgeries.*[58]

Forgeries

Until approximately three decades ago it appeared that the Western Pennsylvania area had been untouched by that worst of all sources of historical error — deliberate forgery of documents. Since that time three such instances have been brought to light; or rather, two have been exposed, and a third is about to be challenged here.

The first in time, which for more than a century remained unquestioned, was a series of spurious documents regarding one "Captain Jack," whose exploits were contained in documents edited and published by Samuel Hazard in 1829 and 1830 in the *Register of Pennsylvania.*[59] Later they were given further notice by Sherman Day[60] and U. J. Jones.[61] Making this fictitious "Captain Jack" the

54 *Ibid.*
55 *Ibid.*, 35f. (The distance is about twenty miles.)
56 *Ibid.*, 49.
57 *Ibid.*, 64. (Little of it was in Fayette County, which did not exist till 1783. Bailey appears to have been misled by the name.)
58 *Ibid.*, 18.
59 16 vols. (Philadelphia, 1828-1835), 4: 389-91, 416, 5: 191.
60 *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1843), 264.
61 *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley* (Philadelphia, 1856), 134-39.

more tantalizing and dangerous was the fact that there were two real men who were called "Captain Jack," Captain Matthew Jack of Westmoreland County, and Captain Patrick Jack from farther east in the mountains. And the error was given additional circulation by a historical novel, *Old Fort Duquesne, or Captain Jack, the Scout,* by W. J. McKnight, which ran numerous editions. Only in the late 1940s was the hoax exposed, the papers being forgeries almost certainly executed by Redmond Conyngham, who first supplied them to Hazard and pointed them out to Day.[62]

Of far greater significance and larger compass is another forgery which was being investigated about the same time by a committee sponsored by the Institute of Early American History and Culture, and made up of numerous highly regarded historians, including Solon J. Buck, Arthur P. Middleton, Douglass Adair, Julian P. Boyd, Francis L. Berkeley, Jr., Lester J. Cappon, Lawrence H. Gipson, Franklin F. Holbrook, Charles F. Jenkins, William B. Marye, and Delf Norona.

The saga of this notorious series of forgeries, published in 1945 by the Greene County Historical Society as *The Horn Papers: Early Westward Movement on the Monongahela and Upper Ohio, 1765-1795,* really began in 1932, when W. F. Horn of Topeka, Kansas, wrote to newspapers in Greene and Washington counties, offering information on documents dating from 1735 relating to the history of this area. It ran an exciting course for more than a decade, although a number of Western Pennsylvania history buffs (including this writer) openly challenged the authenticity of Horn's accounts as early as 1940.

In one of the most complete, careful, and scholarly investigations of its type ever made, the committee found that *not one of the alleged documents or artifacts* was genuine, or (including extensive copies of later-lost documents allegedly made in 1891) dated from much before 1930.[63] The whole story need not be reported here, being readily available in almost any large library in the *William and Mary Quarterly.*[64]

This much has been included here because, as the investigators predicted,[65] "the story of *The Horn Papers* is still not ended, for the noxious influences . . . are already fermenting, and will continue to work for an indeterminant [*sic*] time. . . . Thus the poison works on.

62 William Hunter, *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (Harrisburg, 1960), 31.

63 Arthur Pierce Middleton and Douglass Adair, "The Mystery of the Horn Papers," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., 4 (Oct. 1947) : 435.

64 *Ibid.,* 409-45.

65 *Ibid.,* 442.

And undoubtedly for years to come unwary individuals will continue to be mislead [*sic*] by the . . . fascinating historical fictions." This has proved regrettably true, as evidenced by the adulteration of the Gist biography.[66] Many genealogists also use the *Horn Papers* as genuine, and at second and third hand the poison continues its baleful corruption of history.

Braddock Defeat "Journals"

Within little more than a decade after the exposure of the *Horn Papers* hoax, the University of Oklahoma Press brought out a small volume: *Braddock's Defeat,* subtitled, *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman, The Journal of a British Officer, Halket's Orderly Book,* "Edited from the Original Manuscripts With an Introduction and Notes by Charles Hamilton." The title page bears no date, but the copyright date on its reverse is 1959.

This work was reviewed the following year in the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* by the late C. W. W. Elkin[67] and the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*[68] by John V. Miller. Both reviews indicated verbal raised eyebrows, particularly in regard to Hamilton's comment that while no previously unknown eyewitness accounts of Braddock's campaign and defeat had been found for more than a century, it was amazing that through his purchases "within the space of less than a month, two such precious documents should come to light!" [69]

The Batman's Journal had been purchased at an auction on November 19, 1958,[70] the second from an unnamed "British book dealer." The coincidence might not appear so amazing if a forger learned his work had been taken seriously by an American and decided to plant another where it would catch the same sucker. Perhaps Hamilton was unconsciously expressing his own secret doubt that the two first items in the book were authentic when he wrote: ". . . I hope it will be unnecessary for any scholar to consult the original manuscripts of these three works." [71] (There is, of course, no doubt of the authenticity of the Halkett orderly book.) The second account has been altered from an earlier record. It is a singular coincidence that, as with the *Horn*

66 See above, n. 52.
67 43 (Mar. 1960) : 85-89.
68 84 (Apr. 1960) : 239ff.
69 Charles Hamilton, ed., *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman* . . . (Norman, Oklahoma, 1959), xii.
70 *Ibid.,* xi, n. 3.
71 *Ibid.,* xxf.

Papers, the two questionable first parts should have been sanctified by an unquestionably genuine third.[72]

Since Hamilton's first purchase is dated in November 1958 and his introduction August 1959, it is singular that even he — much less the publisher — should have rushed into print with a work on whose major portion there had been less than nine months research. That Hamilton was ill prepared in the field is evidenced by numerous blunders, such as habitually referring to George Washington as "Captain," [73] and frequent references to Braddock's having marched into an ambush,[74] which, of course, he did not.

Nor was the *Journal of a British Officer,* as Hamilton claimed, a new discovery. It is an expanded copy of No. 136 in the Hardwicke Papers, available in the New York Public Library.[75] I have not had occasion to examine the original and compare the copy to determine the extent of the additions. But whoever is responsible for some of the material printed by Hamilton was either an intentional liar or was not present on Braddock's expedition.

The amazing part is that the two manuscripts should have gone unchallenged so long — particularly that of the "Batman." The faithful family servant who writes better than the average officer of his day, who has access to the ship's log, and records each day's sailing mileage, and who is privy to plans and orders even his master probably would not have learned, is a proper figure in a Victorian historical romance, but utterly unthinkable in the cold light of history in the mid-eighteenth century.

The manuscript pretends to be a diary of the expedition kept from day to day, and even with a long description of the July 9 battle dated the same day, the facsimile page printed in the book shows no indication of having been written in haste or under strain. But under March 23[76] appears the singular entry: "At his place [Alexandria, Virginia] the two Regiments parted. Sir Peter Halkets Regt marched on the Virginia side [of the Potomac] and Colonel Dunbars Regt marched on the Maryland side till they Came to Fort Cumberland

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72 Volume 3 of the *Horn Papers* is wholly made up of warrantee atlas maps of Southwestern Pennsylvania counties, from official records in Harrisburg.

73 Hamilton, ed., *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman . . .* , xii, et seq. Washington never held the rank of Captain except in "Yankee Doodle," and was a full colonel at the time involved.

74 *Ibid.,* x, and elsewhere.

75 Paul E. Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela* (Pittsburgh, 1977), does not challenge the Hamilton copy of this, or the "Batman's Journal."

76 Hamilton, *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman . . .* , 10.

and there to Join." The next entry, dated April 13, takes up the march day by day until the writer reaches "Willses Creek" May 10[77] and "the Fort which his Called Ft. Cumberland."

It is amazing that this batman should have known in March, or even in May, the name of the fort. The title was used by others outside the expedition at least as early as March 7,[78] but Halkett's orderly book does not use "Fort Cumberland" until June 2,[79] nor regularly until June 11. Braddock's orderly book does not use it until May 10.[80] Furthermore, while the batman was supposed to be attached to Halkett's command, that officer's orderly book shows only one company marching April 13, and that to Winchester,[81] and on April 16 a detachment of "a Lieutenant and 30 men" to Wills Creek.[82] (Bear in mind that the batman is supposed to have been attached to *Captain* Robert Cholmley.) The rest of his command was still in Alexandria on April 26[83] and reached Wills Creek May 18.

The two questionable documents, by whomever written, would in their present form appear to have a common source. Both are filled with errors and inaccuracies which would have been most unlikely in the account of an eyewitness. Both give first-hand stories of the legendary ambush, both contain an apparently random scrambling of the forms "ye" and "the" of the definite article, and both refer to "Frayzors"[84] or "Fraziers"[85] *plantation.*[86] Elsewhere it appears to be always referred to as Frazier's "cabin."

Yet both these accounts appear to have been accepted without question by most scholars, and are given high praise for accuracy by Paul E. Kopperman in the most recent work on this subject.[87]

Conclusions

The matters contained in this paper are not the only common or the only serious ones which could be cited. Far from it. In pre-

77 *Ibid.*, 14.
78 Thomas Walker to Gov. R. D. H. Morris, in W. H. Lowdermilk, *History of Cumberland, Maryland* (Washington, D. C., 1878), 109.
79 Hamilton, *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman . . .*, 97.
80 In Lowdermilk, *History of Cumberland,* xxx.
81 Hamilton, *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman . . .*, 81.
82 *Ibid.*, 82.
83 *Ibid.*, 84.
84 *Ibid.*, 27.
85 *Ibid.*, 54.
86 Italics mine. The word, variously capitalized or not, was probably picked up by the forger by attraction to Gist's plantation, at present Mount Braddock. Both these accounts mention Gist's (Hamilton, *The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman . . .*, 24, 46, writing it guests or Guests).
87 *Braddock at the Monongahela,* 165f, 184.

paring the list, one of the principal tasks proved to be choosing what to omit, rather than what to include. Over and over again new errors kept cropping up to distract the writer from the task he had set for himself. But one must draw the line somewhere.

Amateurs often make mistakes in writing on history. But so, regrettably, do professionals — often serious enough blunders that many amateurs would detect them, but perhaps fail to call attention to the matters for fear of challenging authorities who might turn out to be right, after all.

This problem does not appear to admit of any easy or simple solution. Laborers in the field have struggled with it almost as long as Western Pennsylvania history has been written, and errors still get into print and into addresses, misleading the young who may soon be the historians of the area.

Yet there are a few suggestions which may help to hedge against the appearance and perpetuation of so many errors as in the past.

1. Since many errors have appeared in this magazine and other publications of our Society — though happily fewer in late years than long ago, and since no one can be expected to be an expert in all phases of Western Pennsylvania history, it is good that today each article is read by at least two referees besides the editor, and hopefully by persons having some familiarity with the subject matter, or a willingness to do some additional research. All historical journals should take such precautions.

2. Since many errors are perpetuated in newspapers and popular magazines, and on radio and television broadcasts, those who detect them might do a good service by writing letters (as individuals, so as not to embroil the Society) to editors, station managers, or others, pointing them out and urging more care in the future. It might be well to include a carbon copy to the writer of the offending piece, who perhaps has not learned the danger of assuming that anything in print is correct, or has not discovered the difference between research and simply copying and rewriting material.

3. In view of the mishmash of error found in almost everything printed on the story of Mary Schenley, the popularity of the subject, the fact that no complete and authoritative monograph has ever been done on it, and the danger that presently existing materials may go the way of others now lost, some competent member of the Society might render a worthwhile service by making such a study, to be published in one or more issues of this journal.

The only thing approaching such a study is "The Evolution of the O'Hara-Schenley Properties in Allegheny County to 1880," a master's thesis done at the University of Pittsburgh in 1949 by Charles William Shetler. This was, in general, an accurate work so far as it went, except that Shetler sometimes gave too much credence to non-contemporary newspaper stories, such as the one about national involvement and pursuit of the ship on which the lovers fled.[88]

Nor should this be delayed, since materials have a way of disappearing. The Schenley file compiled by Rose Demorest for the Pennsylvania Room at Carnegie Library has been looted of most of the materials it contained when used by this writer about twenty years ago. That library's copy of the Shetler thesis has disappeared, and the only remaining copy in Pittsburgh was misplaced or missing for several weeks from Hillman Library last year.

There may still be additional important material on the subject to be found. This writer secured copies of some minor materials from The Hague a few years ago. In 1934, one J. J. Cloud wrote a series of articles for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* based on Schenley's personal records while holding the government post in Surinam. Queried later while working in New York, Cloud declined to give the location of his sources, but by internal evidence the letters he quoted appear to be genuine beyond dispute. (With this exception, noncontemporaneous newspaper accounts hardly appear worth the paper on which they are printed. In forty years as a Western Pennsylvania newspaperman I have not found any other journalist in this area since 1930 both capable of doing accurate research and willing to present the facts without fanciful elaboration.)

4. There being serious question in regard to the authenticity of the *Batman's Journal,* and in part of the second journal published in the volume *Braddock's Defeat,* as referred to above,[89] some competent colonial scholars should make a complete study of these materials, such as the study made of the *Horn Papers,* with a view to determining once and for all whether forgery exists.

5. Since readers and researchers tend to give most credence to the latest (or if there is only one, the single) complete work on a topic, and in view of the very poor quality of the Bailey biography of Christopher Gist, historical groups should press for a scholar of repute to write a worthwhile book on this important man.

88 See above, p. 108.
89 Pp. 112-14 above.